

WHITE PAPER

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Compaq Systems
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Compaq Computer Corporation

Pentium Pro Q&As

The release of the Pentium Pro processor has been a much-anticipated event for the computer world. As customers continue to transition their business-critical applications from proprietary midrange systems to an industry-standard platform, the Pentium Pro processor will become a cornerstone for building the right application server. Compaq is committed to delivering Pentium Pro-based systems in 1H96. A more detailed white paper that explores the Pentium Pro processor and its relationship to Compaq systems is currently in production and will be available in the near future. The following questions and answers are designed to cover any current customer issues in the mean time.

Q. How significant does Compaq see the Pentium Pro processor for systems products?

A. The Pentium Pro represents a significant breakthrough in performance, price:performance, and reliability for x86 processors. The Pentium Pro is a building block that Compaq and its independent software vendors (ISVs) will use to develop systems with broad appeal for customers ranging from small businesses to large multinational corporations. With the Pentium Pro, Compaq will be able to provide systems performance and software integration that will rival that of expensive, proprietary RISC systems, yet remain consistent with traditional Compaq price, price:performance, and open systems approach.

Q. Does Compaq expect its server customers to rapidly transition from Pentium to Pentium Pro?

A. Compaq expects server customers with demanding environments, who typically purchase ProLiant systems today (especially ProLiant 4500 systems), to quickly evaluate and then transition to Pentium Pro-based systems. Compaq expects this rate to vary somewhat from application to application, so it is important that Compaq and its ISVs work together to test and optimize platforms for Pentium Pro systems. Customers whose environments place more stress on the processor itself will transition to Pentium Pro quickly, aided especially by the testing and support of Compaq and its ISVs, who can provide a reliable, tested platform for deployment.

Q. Will current Compaq ProLiant and ProSignia customers be able to upgrade their systems to Pentium Pro ?

A. ProLiant customers will be able to upgrade their systems to Pentium Pro technology in the first half of 1996. There will be a variety of board and system level upgrades for ProLiant customers. ProSignia systems, the world's most popular mainstream servers, are not typically used in environments that place as much stress on the processor itself. Therefore, in the near term, Compaq will continue to introduce higher speed Pentium processors, rather than Pentium Pro processors, into the ProSignia line in order to provide the price:performance levels demanded by ProSignia customers. Compaq plans to develop ProSignia-class products based on the Pentium Pro processor as the price:performance of Pentium Pro processors in mainstream file/print environments reach levels required by ProSignia customers.

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Q. How are Compaq, key ISVs and Intel working together to increase the rapid acceptance of the Pentium Pro platform?

A. Compaq is working with key ISVs to provide an optimized and well-integrated platform for running business-critical applications. Compaq and Intel continue to work closely together to ensure next-generation processor technology can be brought to customers to optimize total system performance and functionality. Partnerships are the key to successful business strategies and all of the partners, from the processor manufacturers to the systems vendors to the application developers, must work together to ensure application stability and integration on the new platform.

All of the partners are working together, sharing critical information that is required to ensure that the end user has the most reliable and supportable system available. By working with key ISVs, Compaq and Intel are working to develop the market and ease the migration to the latest level of processor technology so that when customers are ready to move to the next level, reliable, optimized systems and applications will be available to solve their business needs.

Q. How is Compaq working with ISVs and Intel to ensure Pentium Pro compatibility?

A. Compaq will be placing Pentium Pro-based systems in ISV beta sites so that Compaq can ensure that Compaq Pentium Pro systems pass the most important performance and integration requirements of demanding applications. In a controlled environment, systems and software can be tuned and optimized to deliver higher performance, but when it comes to ensuring compatibility with applications, the best testing ground continues to be ISV locations, where testers have the most in-depth knowledge of the software. By placing Pentium Pro systems in these ISV locations and working with the software vendors, Compaq will be able to track, optimize and enhance the performance and integration of Pentium Pro servers and better meet customer needs for tested and reliable servers.

By working with selected ISVs, Compaq can gain insight into optimization and integration techniques that can be invaluable for providing a well-integrated platform for deploying mission-critical business applications. Compaq ISVs will also be able to see their software in a real-world environment as they work towards testing and optimizing their software for the Compaq Pentium Pro platform.

Q. Which software vendors are working with Compaq?

A. More than thirty strategic software partners have been chosen by Compaq to participate in this program. Partners such as Microsoft, Oracle, Novell, SAP, Dun and Bradstreet, Sybase and others will be developing and testing their applications on Compaq Pentium Pro-based systems, ensuring Compaq customers a tested and reliable platform for their applications.

The growth of client/server computing and the increased importance that these applications are playing in customers' overall networking environment makes it essential that Compaq works closely with ISVs to guarantee that customers will be able to upgrade in the future to platforms and applications that have been well tested. ISVs will have the added advantage of being able to test their applications on the new Pentium Pro platform to ensure optimal performance and reliability. By working with the leading ISVs early, Compaq ensures customers a well-tuned, well-integrated and stable platform for running their business.

Q. When does Compaq expect to ship Pentium Pro servers to ISVs? When does Compaq expect to ship Pentium Pro systems in volume?

A. Compaq will work closely with leading ISVs to deliver systems as quickly as possible so that they can begin developing applications on the Compaq Pentium Pro platform. Our intention is to have Compaq systems available to ISVs in early 1Q96 so that they can develop and test applications prior to Compaq system availability. Compaq will ship Pentium Pro-based systems in volume in 1996.

As with all new processor introductions, early availability is tied to availability of processors from Intel and systems integration by Compaq. The close relationship between Intel and Compaq will allow Compaq to deliver systems as quickly as possible to ISVs and to customers.

Q. What is the benefit of ISVs developing their applications on Compaq servers?

A. A stable platform is much more than a server. Customers who are deploying mission-critical servers on their network need to be assured that the applications they deploy on their network are tested and optimized. By working with Compaq, the worldwide leader in x86 servers, ISVs can optimize their applications for the leading server platform, delivering tested and optimized applications for tomorrow's demanding environment.

Together, Compaq and ISVs such as Microsoft, Novell, Oracle and Sybase, can work to provide the reliable platforms that customers require for running their business. By optimizing the applications for support on Compaq servers, both Compaq and the ISVs are providing a stable, reliable platform that takes advantage not only of the performance, but also the advanced fault management features of Compaq servers.

Q. If the Pentium Pro processor is backwards-compatible with the Pentium and other x86 processors, why is Compaq taking such strides to ensure compatibility with applications?

A. One of the strongest advantages of the Pentium Pro processor is its compatibility with tens of thousands of commercial and custom applications that are already available. Compaq and its ISV partners have gone to great lengths in the past to ensure the highest levels of software compatibility and integration for our servers. By working early with ISVs, Compaq can ensure that the migration to Pentium Pro is effortless and that the systems customers deploy now will be easily upgradable and well integrated for the technology and applications of the future.

Q. Will PCI be supported in future platforms?

A. Yes, all upgrades for Compaq ProLiant servers to the Pentium Pro will include PCI support and capability. The ProSignia and ProLiant 1500 family already supports PCI, and the Compaq upgrade program will be extending PCI support to the ProLiant 4500 family.

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